



EDUCATION FOR ALL IN INDIA: THE MAJOR ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND POSSIBLE ENABLERS

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ABSTRACT

There are many people in the world who are not able to receive basic education (3 R's) such as Reading, Writing and Arithmetic (Literacy) skills. Education is the pond of knowledge and it makes people superior to other forms of living things. Its aim is to give everyone a chance to learn and benefit from basic education – not as an accident of circumstance, or as a privilege. The Education for All movement is a global commitment to provide quality basic education for all children, youth and adults. Education is the key to the new global economy, from primary school on up to life-long learning and it is central to development, social progress and human freedom. In fact, education makes people educated, acquaints them with some need based skills. According to the Millennium Report, Education is a lifelong process and the ultimate aim of Education for All (EFA) is sustainable development. India has keenly pursued the Education for All (EFA) goals that are defined in the area of early childhood care and education, primary education, gender, youth and adolescents, adult education and quality of education. Therefore in recent past, India has made progress in terms of increasing primary education enrolment, retention, regular attendance rate and expanding literacy to approximately three fourths of the population. But this time, we should be achieved cent percent literacy after a long journey of independence and huge investment in elementary education. This paper describes the major challenges facing in achieving goals of EFA in India and suggests possible enablers for providing education to everyone.

KEYWORDS: Elementary Education, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Education for All (EFA).

INTRODUCTION:

“Everyone has the Right to Education”

- Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Education is an important agency of social control and social transformation. Therefore opportunity of education must be given to everyone. In this regard, the world declared on 1948, 'Everyone has a right to education'. In the year 2000, the world's governments adopted the six EFA goals and the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the two most important frameworks in the field of education. The report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the twenty-first century promoted a holistic view of education consisting of four pillars namely learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together. The education priorities of UNESCO are shaped by these objectives. In response to this situation, the global Education for All (EFA) movement aims to meet the learning needs of all children, youth and adults by 2015. The text was widely adopted by the India and other many countries. In accordance with the Constitutional commitment to ensure free and compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14 years, provision of universal elementary education has been a salient feature of national policy since independence. There is special provision of compulsory education in the Indian constitution under the article 45 and 21A. The various articles of the Indian Constitution provide for education as a fundamental right. According to the constitutional provision of education, Central and state government has made serious efforts to expand the education in the country. These included the scheme of Operation Blackboard (OB); Non Formal Education (NFE); Teacher Education (TE); Mahila Samakhya (MS); Lok Jumbish Project (LJP); Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP); National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (MDM); District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The landmark passing of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act 2009 marks a historic moment for the children of India. For the first time in India's history, children will be guaranteed their right to quality elementary education by the state with the help of families and communities. The world cannot reach its goal to have every child complete primary school by 2015 without India. Keeping in view, India's education system over the past few decades has made many efforts for significant progress.

EDUCATION FOR ALL (EFA):

The Education for All movement was conceived at the world conference by UNESCO, UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank in 1990. That year, in Thailand, delegates from 155 countries, inter-governmental organizations and NGOs agreed to universalize primary education and reduce illiteracy massively before the end of the decade. The World Declaration on Education for All affirmed: 'Every person- child, youth and adult shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs'. Ten years later, with many countries far from having reached this goal, the international community met again in Dakar, Senegal, and affirmed their commitment to achieving Education for All by the year 2015. At the World Education Forum in 2000, the international community defined the global Education for All (EFA) agenda as relating to six areas: early childhood care and education, primary edu-

cation, youth and adult learning needs, literacy, gender equality and quality in education. Three quantifiable goals were set for 2015 halving the number of illiterates, universal primary education and gender equality, the latter two being reiterated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

As the lead agency, UNESCO has mandated to coordinate the international efforts to reach Education for All. Governments, development agencies, civil society, non-government organizations and the media are working toward reaching these goals. In India, the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is India's flagship elementary education program. With over 194 million children in some 1.1 million habitations to be brought into the fold of education, the SSA is one of the largest programs of its kind in the world. The Government of India is putting major financial and technical resources into the program for achieving the goals of EFA.

NEED AND IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION:

Today, every country of the world is trying to be developed in every possible way. Every country whether it is a developed or developing, they both want to progress in a scientific way. Education is a vital means for the potentialities of a human being to emerge in a positive direction so that a man can live in society with full of dignity and can mould the habits, tastes and character of individuals living in society by imparting knowledge and information. Basic education is, and always has been, the key to freedom from subjugation, fear and want. Education is an effective weapon to fight poverty. Education fosters tolerance and understanding, and promotes democratization and stability. It saves lives and gives people the chance to improve their lives. Imagine abandoned children or demobilized boy soldiers, with little or no schooling, living on the street, without work or safe shelter. Imagine sick babies, dying because their mothers cannot read the prescription on the medicine bottle, or a farmer, losing his ancestral land because he cannot read the legal documents. Quality education equips people with the knowledge, skills and self-reliance they need to increase income and expand opportunities for employment. Therefore, education gives people a voice and it increases a nation's productivity and competitiveness, and is instrumental for social and political progress.

MAJOR ISSUES AND CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING EFA:

The primary education has now been widely recognized by everyone involved. Policies and pledges are easy to make but implementation can be difficult and goals hard to achieve, especially in a vast and populous country such as India. EFA movement is making remarkable progress. The annually published UNESCO EFA Global Monitoring Report (GMR) monitors progress towards the six EFA goals, compares the state of education across countries and identifies trends. Recent editions give proof of the remarkable progress we have seen in education since 2000 and show that these education targets are achievable. There are improvements in some aspects and in some regions or countries, but there are also remarkable and serious failures and underachievement in others. Elementary Education System in India is the second largest in the World but in spite of large network of educational institutions, India has already missed the gender parity target and target of covering all children aged 6-14 years in schools by 2010. This has made the entire claim of the education plans under the Sarva Shiksha

Abhiyan (Education for All) out of synchronization with the reality. The EDWATCH Survey (2010) also depicts 4% children among 6-10 age group and 7% children aged 11-14 years were not enrolled in schools. The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), 2011 released by Minister of human resource development, has come out with some shocking revelations. In its key findings, while the student enrolment in rural India has seen a rise (96.7%) in the year 2011, there has been a decline in students' basic reading levels, arithmetic levels and academic levels. Poverty, geographic isolation, gender, unawareness, corruption, lack of qualified teachers, huge population, lack of fundamental resources and political unwillingness, lack of work culture and positive vision, language and ethnicity are some of the main obstacles blocking the contemporary Indian education.

Nowadays the dearth of good and qualified teachers is going to be one of the most crucial challenges. Unawareness of teachers about the methods and techniques of teaching is also a big issue. Teaching is the profession daily updating of methods and techniques is compulsory. Political unwillingness and corruption are also great challenges for our education system. Casteism creates a wall between lower class and upper class. In many schools it is found that the fund which was sending to the school disappeared on the way. Nationally, reading levels are estimated to have declined in many states across north India. The all India figure for the proportion of children in class V able to read a class II level text has dropped from 53.7% in 2010 to 48.2% in 2011. Basic arithmetic levels estimated in ASER 2011 also show a decline. Nationally, the proportion of class III children able to solve a two-digit subtraction problem with borrowing has dropped from 36.3% in 2010 to 29.9% in 2011. At the all India level, children's attendance shows a decline from 73.4% in 2007 to 70.9% in 2011 in rural primary schools. In some states, children's attendance shows a sharp decline over time. For example, in primary schools of Madhya Pradesh, this figure has fallen from 67% in 2007 to 54.5% in 2011, while in Uttar Pradesh, from 64.4% (2007) to 57.3% (2011). If we look at the consensus data of 2011, 74.04% of people above the age of seven are literate. Despite growing investment in education, 26% of its population is still illiterate; and only 15% of Indian students reach high school. There is a wide gender disparity in the literacy rate in India: effective literacy rates (age 7 and above) in 2011 were 82.14% for men and 65.46% for women. The quality of primary education is significantly poor as compared with major developing nations. However, India continues to face stern challenges. RTE focuses on the quality of teaching and learning, which requires accelerated efforts and substantial reforms. The 2011 census, however, indicated a 2001–2011 decadal literacy growth of 9.2%, which is the slower than the growth seen during the previous decade. All of this poses a huge challenge to India to produce educated and empowered young citizens.

According to the latest statistics available from the Flash Statistics and Analytical

Reports on Elementary Education in India (reports of the DISE– 2010), on average there are only three classrooms per primary school in the country. About 14 per cent of the schools have a single classroom each and a similar proportion of the schools are single-teacher schools. Only 85 per cent of the schools in the country have drinking water facilities. Hardly one-fourth of the schools have electricity connection; 5.7 per cent of the primary schools have a computer. About 32 per cent of the primary schools require major or minor repairs of their buildings... and so on.

According to MHRD (31 Dec.2012), almost 6.96 lakhs post of teachers at elementary and 3 lakhs at primary level are vacant in India and more than half (52.29%) of them are vacant in UP and Bihar states. About 35 % of the elementary schools in the country and 81.07% schools in UP do not have separate toilet for girls. Basic facilities like access to drinking water is also lacking in many schools. Looking at the current scenario it looks like it is going to be extremely challenging to provide the necessary infrastructure and that too with an increased intake of teachers and students. Access, reach and gender parity deficit in schooling is observed, in the most populated states of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Rajasthan. Access for children from marginalized groups, minorities, extremely poor households, and educationally and economically lagging states increased.

According to findings of the Central Advisory Board of Education, over 12,000 new schools remain to be opened, while over 2,50,000 additional class rooms and a large number of toilets, drinking water facilities, and ramps are still under construction. EFA has still faces many challenges. Progress towards the EFA goals is not currently fast enough to meet them by 2015. Current Population of India 1,220,200,000 (1.22 billion) is the second most populous country in the world, while China is on the top with over 1,350,044,605 (1.35 billion) people. India

represents almost 17.31% of the world's population, which means one out of six people on this planet live in India. Progress towards the EFA goals is not currently fast enough to meet them by 2015. It is therefore important that the government brings out a new realistic road map addressing 21 million out of school children instead of the estimated 8 million on which the road map was developed earlier.

POSSIBLE ENABLERS FOR ACHIEVING EFA GOALS:

The Strategies for improving the quality of education is a recurrent theme of EFA plans, but it is certainly more difficult to state precise quantitative objectives on the subject. For lack of objectives, firm strategic orientations would be welcome in a field where progress is slow. The Education for All movement was conceived at the world conference in 1990 and by World Education Forum in 2000. But progress towards the EFA goals is not currently fast enough to meet them by 2015. Some of the major components of quality aspects of elementary education on which information may be collected are as follows:

1. The SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan/Education for All Movement), responsible for the implementation of the programme to universalise elementary education, and the NLM (National Literacy Mission) in charge of the eradication of illiteracy should geared up their speed for achieving goals of EFA in India.
2. Increasing the number and quality of teachers, improving school and education system management, reaching disadvantaged and marginalized groups— all this will require more intensive and innovative ways of delivering learning opportunities. Therefore appointment of more qualified teachers should be done for achieving EFA goals.
3. More funds should be invested in basic education to increase the quality of education such as the curricular reform, the pedagogical supports (school manuals, audiovisual and computer material) and the pedagogical practices.
4. The teachers' competency has a positive effect to prepare an effective plan which would help to improve the overall quality of teaching-learning inputs for achieving EFA goals.
5. The use of teaching-learning material play a crucial role in actual curriculum transaction both at the primary and upper primary stage, and consequently on the quality of education. Hence various teaching-learning materials like blackboard, textbooks, workbooks, teaching-learning aids, teachers' guides should be used to facilitate the planning of EFA.
6. More effective classroom process provides better opportunity to the child for exploration, experimentation and communication outcomes. Hence classroom transactions, classroom environment and various teaching-learning strategies should be improved to attract to the children.
7. The EFA goals can be achieved through the efforts of public authorities. It is well recognized that the NGO sector has tremendous potential to contribute towards the goal of EFA. It is envisaged that involvement of NGOs will enlarge the network of agencies and individuals for implementation of basic education programmes.
8. Several strategies such as school mapping and micro planning should be adopted to ensure participation by all members of the community in basic education in bringing all children to school and to articulate their demand for improved school services. Any plan for increasing learning achievement should focus on improving the quality of education which requires the knowledge about the factors affecting the child's learning.
9. The resources should also tempt the wider use of non-traditional methods particularly the alternative delivery modes in formal basic education and informal systems for getting target of EFA.
10. Adequate incentives should be given to the children of SC, ST and other backward sections in the form of scholarships, uniforms, textbooks, stationery and midday meals. SSA focuses on bringing the hardest-to-reach children into school – especially girls, SC, ST, minorities, the urban poor and children of migrant workers. The SSA should increase its focus on teacher accountability and envisage an expanded role for communities to monitor quality and minimum learning levels.
11. An important constraining factor for female education is the lack of women teachers in rural areas. Therefore, special efforts should be made to recruit women teachers and to augment teacher training facilities for women so that adequate numbers of qualified women teachers can be available. Co-ordinated efforts should also be made to provide the necessary support services to enhance their participation and performance.

It is felt that India must revise its target date for achieving the goal of EFA at least once again and suggests that the Government should carefully monitor the implementation of policies, and at the same time, enhance expenditure on education from the present 3.5% to 6% of the GNP as early as possible, so as to deal with the situation more effectively by 2015.

CONCLUSION:

Education is an important agency of social control and social transformation. India has keenly pursued the six EFA goals that are defined in the area of early childhood care and education, primary education, gender, youth and adolescents, adult education and quality of education. The SSA is the Government of India's

flagship programme for the achievement of Education for All (EFA) in a time bound manner. The 86th amendment to the Constitution of India declared making education to the children between the age group of 6-14 years a fundamental right. We are committed to ensuring that all children, irrespective of gender and social category, have access to education that enables them to acquire the skills, knowledge, values and attitudes necessary to become responsible and active citizens of India. In conclusion, EFA and the Fundamental Right to education for all children as declared by the 86th Constitutional amendment in 2002 may be fulfilled in the long-term through the improved implementation of inclusive education. Therefore the country should compound its efforts to ensure the targets of EFA by 2015.

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